

EXHIBIT 18



United Nations

NOON BRIEFINGS

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Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

The following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's noon briefing by Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General.

****Cyprus**

I will start off with a statement we issued a while ago on Cyprus:

In line with the statement issued following the meeting of the Secretary-General with the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Mustafa Akıncı, and the Greek Cypriot leader, Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, in New York on 4 June, and following consultations with all participants, the Conference on Cyprus will reconvene in Geneva on 28 June 2017.

The Conference will reconvene at the political level under the auspices of the Secretary-General, with the participation of Mr. Anastasiades and Mr. Akıncı, as well as Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom as guarantor Powers, and in the presence of the European Union as an observer.

****Kazakhstan**

The Secretary-General was in Astana, Kazakhstan, today where he addressed the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. He highlighted the solid foundation of the group's cooperation with the United Nations and made a special plea for it to show leadership and commitment in the efforts to implement the Paris climate change agreement.

The Secretary-General said that ultimately, inclusive and sustainable development is the best form of preventing armed conflict and violent extremism. As we pursue that objective, he said, let us pay special attention to youth employment, stressing that democratic institutions that uphold the rule of law, and that provide peaceful channels for addressing grievances, are critical for progress, as are the space for civil society, and a free and independent media, he told the leaders.

Today, the Secretary-General also held a bilateral meeting with the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, as well as meetings with King Felipe of Spain, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, and the Foreign Minister of Iran, Mohammad Javad Zarif, as well as the Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Rashid Alimov. We put out his remarks to the press, during which he stressed the importance of the cooperation between the UN and Kazakhstan at the national, regional and global levels.

After a visit to the Expo2017 on Future Energy currently ongoing in Astana, the Secretary-General is now on his way to Uzbekistan.

****Mali**

In Mali, the UN Mission (MINUSMA) reports that three peacekeepers were killed in an attack in Kidal yesterday. The UN's camp was first targeted by indirect fire, in which five peacekeepers were slightly injured. The Mission then deployed three Quick Reaction Forces units around the base and towards the fire point of origin.

Immediately after the indirect fire against the Mission's camp, unidentified assailants attacked a UN observation post south-east of the base, leaving three peacekeepers dead and three others injured.

The UN Mission condemns these attacks and calls on the parties in Kidal to help identify those responsible, so they can ultimately be brought to justice. The Mission reiterates its determination to continue its support to the peace process and to protect the population.

We extend our condolences to the families of the fallen peacekeepers and we wish a speedy recovery to the wounded ones.

****Iraq**

From Iraq, the Secretary-General's Special Representative in that country, Ján Kubiš, strongly condemned the suicide bombing in the Musayib District in northern Babel and expressed his condolences for the families of the victims.

He said that terrorists continue to disregard the Holy Month of Ramadan and continue to murder innocent people, showing how cowardly they are.

Mr. Kubiš added that no matter what the terrorists do, the resolve of the Iraqi people will not wane.

****Syria**

Our humanitarian colleagues are alarmed that no UN convoys have moved to besieged and hard-to-reach locations in Syria in over two weeks. The last such convoy was on 22 May.

Meanwhile, the UN continues its concern for the safety and well-being of some 4,000 people who have reportedly fled from the Tel Safuk area and surrounding villages along the Iraqi border to Markada town in Al-Hasakeh Governorate, due to ongoing fighting in the area.

Also, as fighting advances into Raqqa City, we have reports that over 95,000 people have already fled the city. We remind all parties to the fighting of their obligations to protect civilians under international humanitarian law.

****Deputy Secretary-General's Travels**

The Deputy Secretary-General will depart New York for Atlanta to attend the Rotary Presidential Peace Conference on 10 June, where she will deliver the keynote address. In attendance will be Rotarians, world business leaders, and senior Government officials, as well as civil society organizations.

She will then depart later tomorrow for Jeddah, in Saudi Arabia, where she will meet with the President and senior management of the Islamic Development Bank. She will also meet with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Community of Practice and attend a town hall meeting to deliver a lecture on working with member States of the Islamic Development Bank to achieve the SDGs.

She will travel back to New York on Monday.

****Democratic Republic of the Congo**

And also on travel, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, will be in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Monday. During his trip, he will visit Kinshasa, Kananga, Goma, and Beni. Mr. Lacroix is expected to meet with national authorities, members of the Government, as well as political and civil society actors. He will convey the need for all Congolese to work in a spirit of collaboration and good faith to establish the special provisions and for the speedy and full implementation of the transitional arrangements. Mr. Lacroix will also meet with the mission's staff.

Also on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, today called on the Human Rights Council to establish an international investigation into the widespread human rights violations and abuses that have occurred in the Kasai Central and Kasai Oriental Provinces.

Since August 2016, some 1.27 million people from the Kasais have been internally displaced by the violence. The UN Human Rights Office has documented 42 mass graves, although the actual number may even be higher. Reports of summary executions and other killings — including of children — as well as sexual violence have been documented.

In early May, Mr. Zeid had urged the Government of the DRC to take steps to ensure that a credible, transparent investigation be established by 8 June. While the Government has sought technical support and advice from the UN, the High Commissioner said its response to date falls short, in view of the gravity and widespread nature of the violations, and given the imperative need for justice for the victims. The crimes committed in the Kasais appear to be of such gravity that they must be of concern to the international community as a whole, and in particular to the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner said.

****Food Fraud**

Our colleagues at the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) today launched a project to help countries detect food fraud and contamination.

The project will develop handheld devices to test for adulterants, contaminants and mould in food by using nuclear-based technology regularly used by border police in the detection of illicit drugs and explosives.

Food fraud is estimated to cost the global food industry between \$10 and \$15 billion dollars every year; that's about 10 per cent of all commercially-sold food products. The goal of the project is to reduce this cost by making available low-cost devices and methods for food authorities to use directly in the streets and markets, particularly in developing countries. If you're interested, go to the IAEA website.

****Appointment**

I have a senior appointment to announce today: The Secretary-General, in consultation with the Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development, otherwise known as UNCTAD, has decided to appoint Isabelle Durant of Belgium as the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD, at the Assistant Secretary-General level. Ms. Durant will succeed Joakim Reiter of Sweden, to whom the Secretary-General is grateful for his dedicated service and commitment and contribution to UNCTAD.

Ms. Durant brings to the position a wealth of international experience at the senior level in her interactions with Governments, the private sector and civil society.

She is currently a member of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region, and she formerly served as Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium for four years, as well as Vice-President of the European Parliament. Her full bio is in my office.

****Press Briefings**

Today at 12:30, Damian Cardona will be joined by the PGA (President of the General Assembly), Peter Thomson, and the Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Wu Hongbo, and the Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, Isabella Lövin. And they will brief you on the outcome of the Ocean Conference, which closes today.

And at 3:30, there will be a press briefing entitled "Oceans and Climate: The Way Forward". That will include Mohamed Shainee, Fisheries and Agriculture Minister of the Maldives; Omar Figueroa, Minister of State for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, the Environment and Sustainable Development for Belize; and Umiich Sengebau, Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism of Palau.

****Questions and Answers**

Ms. Landry?

Question: Stéphane, on Cyprus, is the Secretary-General... will he be going to Geneva for this new round of talks...?

Spokesman: Yes, you can expect him to be... I would expect him to be there at the opening.

Question: On the 28th. Okay. And also, the security arrangements that the UN envoy... the document that the UN envoy is discussing, is that expected to be completed by the 28th?

Spokesman: I can't say if it will be completed by the 28th, but obviously, the... that is an agenda... the security issue is an agenda on the conference's work. Yep?

Question: Thanks, Stéphane. Yesterday, Saudi, the UAE [United Arab Emirates], Bahrain and Egypt put out a statement in which they have a list of terror supporters. There's about 50... I think there's 59 people and 12 groups. One of the groups is Qatar Charity, and it has partnerships or has worked with UNICEF [United Nations Children's Fund], UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency], WFP [World Food Programme]. I'm wondering if the SG has any reaction to this.

Spokesman: Yeah, I mean, we've seen... we've obviously seen the media reports and the reference to this charity, which has worked with OCHA... I'll come to you... don't worry. As I said, we've seen the report. We've seen the name of the list. As a matter of principle, the UN is bound only

by its... by the sanctions lists put together by UN organs such as the Security Council. We're not bound by any other lists. OCHA [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs], over the years, has built strong partnership with these organizations, based on shared humanitarian principles, which are strictly non-political. For example, the Qatari Charity implements projects included in the UN-coordinated Humanitarian Response Plans in Yemen, in Syria, and in Iraq, where they also participate in the common humanitarian coordination structure. OCHA does not receive any funding from either of these organizations or provide funding to them.

Question: Did any of these four countries or all of them together send any correspondence to the Secretariat in regards to this list...?

Spokesman: I'm not aware, as of this morning, of any letter having been received specifically on this. Mr. Lee?

Question: Sure. Thanks a lot. I wanted to ask about this report in South Sudan of renewed attacks. The rebels say that they killed 14. Some people have a higher number. Since there's a mission there, what's the mission's calculation of how many people killed and who did it?

Spokesman: I did not receive an update from the mission today on the latest findings.

Question: And what about on this issue of blocking foreign journalists from reporting? Regional groups...

Spokesman: We're looking into it, obviously. But I think, as I said yesterday, we stand firmly for the rights of journalists to report and especially in a crisis such as South Sudan and where the UN has such a large presence. Masood and then Abdelhamid.

Question: Thank you. Stéphane, now that the President of Turkey, Mr. [Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, has said that he will be sending Turkish troops to Qatar and that situation over there is going bad to worse, is the Secretary-General going to offer any of his good offices to these countries to — what do you call it — back off? because it... it will become a powder keg in the Middle East.

Spokesman: No, we're very aware of the tensions ongoing in the Gulf. We know there are a number of regional initiatives that are going on, diplomatic regional initiatives. We hope those succeed. I think it's important that all can do what they can to sustain and promote regional unity. The Secretary-General has discussed regional developments in a number of his bilaterals with people he's seen in Astana. Abdelhamid?

Question: Thank you, Stéphane. Last night, there was a meeting in the Security Council about ICC [International Criminal Court] in which [Fatou] Bensouda submitted her twenty-fifth

report on Darfur. A few African ambassadors attacked... attacked ICC strongly, including the Egyptian ambassador, who called on the ICC to stop pursuing the... the arrest of President Omar al-Bashir. The Sudanese ambassador asked a good question about the relation between the Secretariat and the ICC, and he called on the Secretariat to distance itself from ICC, because it's giving the impression that it's part of the UN system. My question, is the ICC part of the UN system? And what is the Secretary-General's position vis-à-vis this call to distance itself from the ICC?

Spokesman: I think the statute of the ICC as laid out in the Rome Statute are very clear. The prosecutor was there at the invitation of the Security Council. It's not something that involves the Secretariat. The ICC is independent from the Secretary-General. We do believe that the International Criminal Court is a critical part of ensuring that accountability is seen through in war crimes, in crimes against humanity. It is an important part of the international justice system. Yeah, in the back, and then Carole.

Question: Thank you. Stéphane, you mentioned the Secretary-General met with the Pakistani Prime Minister, and I think I heard you say the Indian foreign secretary or was it the Pakistani...?

Spokesman: No, I said the Pakistani, Nawaz Sharif. I did not mention the Indian.

Correspondent: Not the Indian. Okay.

Spokesman: Okay. Carole, if you have a quick follow-up and then... sorry.

Question: Stéphane, just getting back to Syria, what you mentioned at the top there, the two weeks without deliveries, so I imagine some of these besieged areas are in the de-escalation zones, and what does this tell you about the... the agreement on... on...

Spokesman: The de-escalation zones, it's our understanding there were talks in Moscow between Mr. [Staffan] de Mistura and the Russian Foreign Minister, I think today or yesterday, just on these zones. We would like to see a situation evolve in Syria as quickly as possible where humanitarian access is continues... is... where the conditions for unfettered humanitarian access is created. I mean, we have seen... you know, a number of weeks since we've had managed deliveries. There are places that have not seen deliveries in months. It's critical that our convoys be allowed through without being stopped at every checkpoint and without certain items being taken out. Joe and then Nizar. Go ahead, Joe, and then Nizar.

Question: Yeah. I just want to go back to that Qatar charity or charities. First of all, you said the UN is only bound in terms of not dealing with entities that are specifically listed in, I guess, Security Council or other UN-based sanctions. But does that mean that if information comes to the

Secretariat's attention that raises concerns about the bona fides of an entity, an NGO... I mean, what kind of due diligence is performed?

Spokesman: There is common sense, hopefully, in everything we do.

Question: Well, hope.

Spokesman: But, obviously, if information is shared about particular individuals or particular... or particular entities that raise concern, we would take a look at that. I mean...

Question: Well, is that being done... Is that being done in this particular case?

Spokesman: We have not received... I'm not aware if we've received any communication on this except for media reports.

Question: Well, not official communication...

Spokesman: What I was also, hopefully, saying clearly is that we have worked... OCHA has worked with these entities and talked with the Qatar Charity as a partner, but we did not... we do not provide funding for them, and we do not receive funding for them.

Question: But can you just elaborate what that means to say the UN's worked as a partner? I understand there's no direct dollar or no monetary funding going back and forth, but what does that mean to be a partner?

Spokesman: That means... in very broad terms, that means, when the UN has a humanitarian plan, it works with NGOs [non-governmental organizations], local, regional NGOs, in ensuring that the aid is coordinated. I mean, the "C" in OCHA just stands for coordination and that's what it means. Nizar?

Question: Yeah. On Hajjah, part of the crackdown on the Qatari nationals in Saudi Arabia, many pilgrims to Mecca were forced to leave Mecca, and they were... at short notice had to leave the whole... many cities. Also, their cars were vandalised. There were attacks on them systematically from civilians, and the police did not help these people. What's the position...?

Spokesman: I haven't seen those reports. I can look into it.

Question: I have another question.

Spokesman: Yes. I would hope you would.

Question: I don't know why you... you're avert to these... although there are pictures and videos.

Spokesman: No, I haven't seen those reports...

Question: I'll send you copies of them. On Raqqa, there are new reports showing that white phosphorus again is used in Raqqa against civilians and densely populated areas. You mentioned that some convoys did not go through to Hasakeh and other regions. How about this... what kind of humanitarian aid is being sent to the civilians and coming out from Raqqa itself?

Spokesman: We are... through the UN and its partners, we have... we are delivering aid, whether it's food, non-food items, to those people who are able to get out of Raqqa.

Question: As for the use of white phosphorus in Mosul and Raqqa?

Spokesman: I mean, we've seen those reports. Obviously, if these turned out to be true, it would be deeply troubling, to say the least.

Question: Who's going to investigate if they are true or not?

Spokesman: We'll have to see. At this point, I have nothing more to share with you. Masood?

Question: Stéphane, do you have a readout of the talks between the Pakistani Prime Minister and Secretary-General and...

Spokesman: They... in his bilaterals, the Secretary-General discussed development issues, including economic development, environmental sustainability, and regional issues.

Question: And regional issues. Does that include Kashmir also?

Spokesman: I will leave it at regional issues. The region is the region. Yes, ma'am?

Question: Thank you, Steph. Turning to an issue that's sort of less front page, I was just wondering what the status of perhaps political talks or move... any movement regarding Eastern Ukraine and also any assessments of humanitarian conditions.

Spokesman: I can get you a humanitarian update on Monday on Ukraine. The human rights monitoring continues. I think they issued a report not that long ago, so you could refer to that, but nothing on the political developments that we're able to share. As you know, there's the Minsk... the

Normandy group, the Minsk groups, but those are not things that we are directly involved in. Matthew and then Abdelhamid.

Question: Sure. I want to ask about Morocco and then something about the Secretary-General. On... on... on this issue of Rif... I guess I want to ask you, now there's the use of tear gas on protesters and a number... at least two journalists have been arrested and taken to Casablanca for questioning, and charges are unclear. They're from AWAR TV and Rif Press. I know three days ago you said you'd hoped to get something. Is... what does DPA [Department of Political Affairs] think about this? Or... or what has...

Spokesman: You know, obviously, as a matter of principle, we believe wherever that people have a right to demonstrate peacefully but, more specifically, I have nothing to share with you. Your next question.

Question: Okay. The next question is, the Secretary-General on this Central Asian trip is going, among other places, to Turkmenistan. As you may have seen, Amnesty International and other groups have put out a... a... a pretty damning report that 18 men have been condemned to 12 to 25 years to prison after a trial that took two years. It just happened. The press release is dated yesterday. So my question is... two questions. One, is the Secretary-General going to intend to raise this type of pretty extreme human rights issue during his trip to Central Asia and, in particular, in Turkmenistan? And, two, I see that he leaves there the 13th and he's back here the 15th. Is there some secret diplomacy taking place, or what's his itinerary in terms of coming back?

Spokesman: If it's secret, I'm not aware of it.

Question: All right. Is he stopping in Portugal? Just a question.

Spokesman: Is he stopping in Portugal? I'm not aware if he's stopping in Portugal, but wherever he is, we're always happy to say where he is on the day where he is.

Correspondent: On the day of. Okay.

Spokesman: You had asked something else.

Question: I'd asked if he's going to raise human rights issues...

Spokesman: Oh, yes. I mean, obviously... I mean, I think he's already mentioned human rights in a regional setting at the [Shanghai Cooperation Organization] session. He will mention that, among other things, as he continues his travels wherever...

Question: What about a trial that just took place and people were sentenced to 25 years...

Spokesman: I don't have any specific guidance on that specific event. Abdelhamid?

Question: Yes, Steph. There was a meeting on Tuesday between the Council on settlement and the Israeli Ministry of Housing, and they submitted plans, which is now in the hands of the Interior Committee at the Knesset, to establish 67,000 units, 67,000, to accommodate 340,000 settlers in the West Bank as they serve to solve the crisis of high prices in Israel. So, with that coming at alarming rate, what is the UN doing to prevent such a massive project, which will leave nothing to what we call...

Spokesman: We're aware of the plan and its... as it's moving, obviously, I think we've expressed in the past and will continue to express our concern, I think especially at this plan for this large number of housing units. I think... we stand against any and all unilateral action that threaten peace and undermine the two-State solution. As the Secretary-General has consistently stressed, there is no plan B for Israelis and Palestinians to live together in peace and security. Settlement activities are illegal under international law and present an obstacle to peace.

Thank you. I'll get our guests.

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